POLITICAL TRANSITION AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN SELECTED AFRICAN COUNTRIES. A STUDY OF NIGERIA, GHANA AND KENYA

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ABSTRACT
Like every other continents, history has it that after the attainment of independence most Africancountries witnessed several military regimes occasioned by coups and counter coups d'état. With returned to democracy in late 1950s and early 1960s, the authoritarian civilian government refused to transit power to those who won election in opposition party or those who are not their political favorites.In a bid to elongate their stay was greeted with discontent by pro-democrats, organized civil society, the media as well as the masses. Consequent upon this, the unwillingness to transit political power by the ruling party in turn formed a complex issue in sustaining African nascent democracy. This made the political progress of these countries towards full blown democratization became thorny. The objective of this paper is to examine political transitions in Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya and how their democratic rules are consolidated. To achieve the objective of the paper,Historical and Descriptive Research Method were adopted and data were got through the aid of primary and secondary sources. Elite theory was also adopted as a theoretical framework. The major findings revealed among others that several attempts at providing political transition and democratic consolidation in most African Countries were hampered by personality cult of the emerging political gladiators who exploited the instrument of state to promote their selfish agenda, by way of manipulating transition programmes and advanced political strategies to prolong their stay. Based on the above findings the paper recommended among others that politics should not be viewed as do or die affairs, those at the position of power should accept defeats and hand over to power to whoever win elections, hate speech must be tamed if parties have to operate in a safe political environment

and inter-ethnic conflicts stemmed and institutions such as the judiciary, legislature and electoral body should be independent etc.

Key Words: Political Transition, Democratic Consolidation and Democracy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Democratic transition refers to the "transformation process from a non-democratic regime to a procedural and substantive democracy, either as the first government in a newly independent country or by replacing authoritarian in an older one" (Diamond, 2012). African Countries experienced long term Military rule which truncated their nascent democracy. African infant democracy has refused to grow to stage of maturity as a result of anarchical and autocratic nature of governance. Despite the democratic experiments in African countries, records have it that the result is unimpressive irrespectiveof the introduction of constitutions, legislatures and electoral systems.

Democratic transition and succession in Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya has been descriptively problematic. Since their independence, one of the political problems faced by these countries has been the issue of succession from one democratically elected regime to another which were intermittently disrupted by some military and social forces in 1966, 1983 and 1993. Prominent among these forces are military intrusion and coup d' etat which has continually contributed to the breaks in the linkages between the civilian governments. This has interrupted the democratic adventure of these countries and paved ways for lop sided federal and democratic practices with most military regimes being undemocratic and autocratic.

The Economic Commission for Africa's (ECA's) African Governance in Report (AGR) in Esebonu (2012) stated that since the foundational elections of the 1980s there have been numerous elections in Africa, but many countries have not had quality elections, compared to the developed world. Political transitions in African Countries have always become moments for some groups to jubilate and others to grieve. They open old cleavages and create new ones, and in so doing divide society along multiple fault lines, leading to conflict as well as intense and desperate rivalry in the political arena. Electionhas created a notion of winners and loser. In particular, for the winners an election has meant opportunities for them to emerge as new ruling elite-a group of new political actors and their political allies that enjoy almost untrammeled access to political power and wealth. For the losers on the other hand an election means a fall from power and loss of access to wealth and privileges associated with public office. In effect, an election- especially transition election is an opportunity for a faction of the political class to win state/ political power in order to gain unqualified access to the wealth of the nation.

Political Transition to civil rule in African Countries is increasingly viewed as ''a patched one''.Practically, political transitions in Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya up to date to some extent have exposed vitriolic tendencies to alarming dimensions which threaten the stability of African state.Several attempts at providing political transition and democratic consolidation in most African countries have been scuttled by personality cult of the emerging political gladiators who exploited the instrument of the state power to promote their personal self-agenda, by way of manipulating transition programs, refused to accept defeat in election and hand over power to

opposition party. This engendered tension, uncertainty and raised political questions about individual as well as group survival, identity and national cohesion.

The fear, insecurity and anguish that transitions have generated at the personal level impact adversely on state institutions and diminish the latter capacity to discharge their governance responsibilities effectively.This is coupled with some anti-democratic practices as executive recklessness, abuse of the rule of law, abuse of power by political actors, vote buying and selling, money politics, campaign of calumny, hate speech and lack of internal democracy within political parties among others. It is on this premise that the paper tends to examine the challenges of effective political transition and democratic consolidation inselected African Countries using Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya as a reference point.

CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

Political transition

Ibrahim (2007) conceived democratic political transition as a passage from non-democratic to democratic situation. It refers to the transformation process from a non-democratic regime to procedural democracy. The essential attribute of democratic transition is the establishment of constitutional rule and operation of multiparty system.

It can also been seen as a case of alternations between authoritarianism and democracy, with democratic election used as an occasional safety value when public dissent forced authoritarian to seek an exit, or when authoritarians sought to legitimize their own rule or that of their nominees. Democratic transition is all about operational and institutionalization of democratic principle, value, structure and processes leading to a fully sustainable democratic form of governance (Slephen, 2018).For Eichen Green (2018), Democracy is an instrument for bringing about social, political and economic improvement.

The international institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) posits that in order to ensure the success of political transitions, those who took power had to;

i   Create civil order and end violence, while ensuring that all security and intelligence forces would be subject to control by the new civilian authorities.

ii.   Inspire domestic trust and gain international legitimacy. This often involved developing inclusive and fair electoral procedures.

iii.   Assure that those who took office would be well prepared, technically and politically, for their new governing responsibilities.

iv.   Balance the need for bureaucratic, technocratic, security and judicial expertise against the aim to limit the influence of the previous regime.

v.   Balance responding victims of human rights violations perpetrated by the previous regime and holding perpetrators accountable while preserving the loyalty of security forces (some of whose members had been involved in these violations).

vi.   Establish or protect the autonomy and authority of independent judiciaries and independence media that could hold national executives and others accountable.

v.   Achieve economic growth, increased employment, and control inflation, while improving the provision of services and increasing public expenditures to meet the needs of the poor.

Democratic Consolidation

Democratic consolidation is a contested concept. It is defined as the process by which a new democracy matures in a way that means it is unlikely to revert to authoritarianism without an external shock (Wikipedia, 2009:1). According to Valenzuela (1990) cited in Akubo and Yakubu (2014), the building of a consolidated democracy involves in part an affirmation and strengthening of certain institutions, such as the electoral system, revitalized or newly created parties. Judicial independence and respect for human rights, which have been created or recreated during the course of the transition. In this context, democratic consolidation becomes a post-transitional condition, curiously akin to some developmental fixity.Furthermore, democratic consolidation could be said to effectively prevail in most mature and advanced democracies of the world, where many of the prominent democratic principles largely constitute the political culture. One of the greatest elements of democratic consolidation is free, fair and credible elections for transition from one administration to another. The above seems to be absent in Africa. This is because African Countries have not internalized democratic ideals and do not exhibit them behaviorally and constitutionally.

Democracy

Democracy in this study stands for a people-centered system of government, which entails periodic popular elections, in which the sanctity of the electoral process is strictly guaranteed. Implicit in this position is the connotation that democracy does not only allows mass participation, by way of encouraging the electorate to participate in the selection of their representatives, but also that democracy is nourished by transparency and accountability in public administration.

According to Huntington (2017), the Two-Turnover Test (TTT)' or transfer of power test is one of the strongest indices of determining the strength of a democracy. This implies that the country must have successfully alternated political power twice among competing political parties. In other words, if a government that was elected in a free and fair election is defeated in a subsequent election, it will accept the verdict and surrender power.

2. POLITICAL TRANSITION AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN NIGERIA. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In Nigeria, it has been observed that the country has been in perpetual transition since tis amalgamation for British colonial purposes in 1914. The dynamic of colonial era was characterized with nationalist struggles for participation in the running of state affairs, creation of

political parties and the struggle for independence. The post-independence dynamics were thus centered on the expectation to institutionalize the democratic processes, but were however diverted to ethno-religious and regional divides; which consequently led to military rule from 1966-1979 (Obiora, 2005). Even when the 1993 transition was to join the group of thirds wave countries of the 1990s, it was truncated at cancellation of presidential elections. Nevertheless, the eleven months official program of transition in 1998 which led to the fourth republic was an overwhelming internal consensus and determination of Nigerians to democratize. The internal dynamic of democratization in Nigeria has therefore gone through certain historical and transformational phases.

It is however significant to note that 1993-1999 witnessed an unprecedented military dictatorship leading to the suppression of democratic transition heightened by the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential elections which was presumably and generally believed to be free and fair. Thus Nigerians in their determination to end the military rule and return to democracy strongly opposed to continue military rule and insisted on the country's return to civil democratic rule. This lead to arbitrary arrest and detention of politicians some ofwhich have dearly paid with their lives, abuse of human rights, political assassination, extra-judicial killings, closure and seizure of media houses and publication.

This notwithstanding Nigerians kept their resilience to anti-military and press hard in the struggle for democratic transition. Thus, the political elites in conjunction with the "mass media extensively and effectively employed anti-military publications and reportage mostly at the risk of losing their lives to expose the evil and misrule of military rule in order to mobilize the civil societies against the military juntas" (Esebonu, 2012). Consequently, episodes of mass protest, industrial strife, and civil disturbance across Nigeria by various civil society groups, labour unions and other pro-democracy organizations necessitated transitional programs, which co-incidentally came along side with the death of General Abacha.

Certainly, democratic transition or democratization era is related to Nigeria in a number of ways, the notable ones is the ideological hegemony, and outsourcing economic opportunities for the countries and MNC for the North. Several ideological hegemony attempts to spread and promote the ideals of democracy thereby popularizing the values and ideas of democratic struggle, which culminate to pressure on military regimes to liberalize and ultimately made transition to democracy, however amidst the lack of proper principles for democratic governance. The second way interprets how democratic transition is related to Nigeria through the emergence of transitional corporation, particularly, the increase in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Whereas foreign investors stay away from investment opportunities during the military regimes, more FDI is witnesses at the beginning of 1999 democratic dispensation onwards. Suffice it to say the role of globalization through liberalization in promotion democratic transition has been a salient feature in this era (Diamond, 2012).

3. POLITICAL TRANSITION AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN GHANA

Ghana has made its liberal democratic constitution a trademark since the military disengaged from politics. Before this, the post-colonial elite violated many principles enshrined in the

country's post-independence constitution by restricting civil liberties, closing down opposition political parties, and not respecting the independence of the judiciary. Ghana's first, second, and thirds Republics failed due to military coups in 1966, 1972, and in 1981. Describing the situation, Gyimah (2014) notes that the First Republic stumbled after the 1966 military coup as the constitution was reversed, limiting civil liberties as the Kwame Nkrumah regime adopted a one party system under the Conventional People's party (CPP). Ghana's chequered political path to establishing its liberal democratic constitution came to an end in 1991, when pressures mounted from internal and external sources for a return to constitutional rule.

The provisional National Defense Council (PNDC), an administrative body created in the regime of Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings, was initially meant to be a revolutionary body, as it incorporated both civilians and ex-military officers. But the PNDC's actions and functions began to degenerate into malicious infringements on the freedom of expression of the media and civil society groups, who requested for a return to civilian rule. It is noteworthy that this body (PNDC), was intended for focus on transition, but was indirectly working for Rawlings as they tried to stop any media that criticized their actions. Agyeman-Duah (2017) states that the PNDC cabinet was made up mostly by civilians who thrived on the 'direct' support of the military. The government thus selected members of this body for top administrative offices in the country. Rawlings claimed that he was reluctant to take power, but that the PNDC created a pathway for him to return to power as demand for civilian rule grew stronger.

Agyaman-Duah (2017) further notes that the Interim National Coordinating Committee (INCC) was created to carry out the duty of the National Defense Committee (NDC), in order to check other associations and social groups rising against the existing structure. The NDC was empowered to monitor the activities of various bodies created as the country planned to move into constitutional rule. The NDC was established to ensure that the rights of the people are protected; bring to book people that are involved in corrupt activities and as well try to disrupt the revolution geared towards maintaining a collective national discipline where body in the country has the equal right to take part in decision-making.

Wolfgang (2006) posits that once a transition from authoritarian regime in a given country has reached a point where free, fair, credible and competitive elections are held, democratic actors usually cannot afford to relax and enjoy the bounded uncertainty of democratic rule. More often than not, regime threatening 'unbounded uncertainties' persist and the democrats fundamental concern usually shift from establishing democracy's core institutions to securing what they have achieved. For these actors consolidating the new democracy is the next important task to achieve. As a way of corroborating this, Kotze (2010:4) too opines that:-

> *Once a state has abandoned authoritarianism and has reconstructed its political society to mirror the institutions and processes of liberal democracy, and has achieved institutional stability through processes and institutions such as elections, parliament and constitution, and has adopted commitment to values such as individualism, human rights, with a focus on*

> *the freedom of the individual, and commitment to procedural justice and the*
> *rule of law, such a state is a fully functioning or a consolidated democracy*

Democracy consolidation is defined as, 'making new and fragile democracy secure, extending its life expectancy beyond the short term and making it immune against the threat of possible reversal to authoritarianism

The Ghanaian masses have consistently demonstrated complete confidence in democracy and accepted it as the only legitimate way to rule. The political elites in the country too have learnt to abide by the regulations guiding the practice of democracy while election has been acknowledged as the only means of getting access to power. The two dominant political parties in the country: the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) now accept the fact that when they lose an election, they have to wait for another general election in order to recapture power. Thus, the campaign for the next general elections in Ghana starts almost immediately after the announcement of election results Furthermore, the political sophistication demonstrated in Ghana after the sudden death of president Atta Mill in 2012 was another evidence of the love and resilience of Ghanaians for democracy. Barely six hours after the announcement of Atta Mill's death, the Vice President, was John DramaniMahama sworn in as the new president, in accordance with the provision of Article 60 (6) of the 1992 constitution (Bunbongkarn, 2017). The seamless transition was unparalleled in a continent where succession was always a tug of war like what Nigeria experienced shortly before and after the death of President MusaYar' Adua, when some cabals in Nigeria tries to prevent the Vice President from functioning as Acting President.

According to Ette (2012) one of the ingredients of democratic consolidation is the ability of the majority of the people to keep pursuing the unity and peace of the country. This is a situation in which no group will engage in threat of secession from the state, or any other threat that can lead to democratic breakdown even in the face of imminent economic, social and political crisis. In other words, a very important element of democratic consolidation is a behavioral disposition of groups to constantly remain part of the country even in the face of obvious challenges. Ghana, like many other countries in Africa is a multi-ethnic society. The ethnic in the country include; Ashanti/Akans, Mole-Dagbon, the Ewe, Ga-Adangbe, the Fante and several others. The country is also polarized by religion. The Southern part of the country, where the ruling NPP draws its major support is predominantly a Christian society, while Islam is the dominant religion in the Northern part which serves as the major political base of the NDC.

Donnell (2004) opines that one of the ingredients of democratic consolidation is the protection of the rule of law. This implies that a consolidated democracy must have a very strong and autonomous judiciary which is the custodian of the rule of law. The judiciary must not be subjected to either the legislative or executive manipulation. The Ghanaian judiciary has demonstrated its autonomy and impartiality over the years through some politically sensitive landmark judgments which it has delivered, in some cases against the ruling party. The judiciary has also reviewed some actions of the state institutions which were not in tandem with the constitution and declared them illegal. For instance, HondariOkine, a Deputy Director of Ghana's immigration service during Rawlings administration challenged his dismissal by John

Kufour's administration, claiming that it was politically motivated. The court delivered a judgment in his favor and ordered that he be restated to his position. More so, a former chief of staff to Jerry Rawlings, Nana A to Dadzie was charged and tried for financial impropriety by Kufour administration, but the court discharged and acquitted him. Similarly, Kennedy Agyapong who was an NPP member of the parliament was tried for treason by Atta-Mill administration in 2013, but the court also discharged and acquitted him.

Ghana, in the Fourth Republic has had seven successful general elections (1992, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2016) including three democratic change of party in government. These took place in 2000, 2009, and 2017. Some scholars and researchers have commended J.J. Rawlings and John Kufour for not making efforts to manipulate the constitution to extend their stay in effect beyond the two terms allowed by the allowed by the constitution. President Rawlings completed the maximum of two terms stipulated by the constitution in 2001. Despite the fact that his anointed and preferred candidate, John Atta-Mill who was also his vice-President lost the presidential election, Rawlings still successfully handed over power to John Kufour of the opposition NPP who won the election.

4. POLITICAL TRANSITION AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN KENYA

Since Kenya's independence in 1963, the development of democracy and public participation has had mixed results. Kenya adopted a Westminster style of democracy with multi-party institutions and a federal system of government. There was a devolution structure of government, popularly known as majimbo under which the country had seven autonomous regions, some of whose boundaries were coterminous with ethnic settlement patterns(Gibbon, 2015). Some of the numerically large group have a region to themselves and therefore some region are identifiable with ethnic groups. Each regional government was responsible for setting and implementing a broad range of policies. There were several political parties, the main ones being the Kenya Africa National Union (KANU) and the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU). KANU's membership included some of the large ethnic groups, the Kikuyu and the Luo, while KADU coalesced the numerically smaller ethnic communities, many of which feared domination by large groups after independence. The first government dismantled this set-up after independence. The ruling party, KANU, made it difficult for the regional governments to operate.

The main opposition, KADU, joined KANU to form one party and govern with them. The government also introduced a series of constitutional amendments that centralized power in the presidency. These changes significantly constrained democratic participation. The government became increasingly intolerant of dissent. In 1966, some critics within government resigned their positions to form a new political party-the Kenya People's Union (KPU). Keen to consolidate power without rivalry, the government banned the opposition in 1969. This gave the then ruling party, KANU, unchecked dominance. More amendments to the constitution to centralize power in the executive followed. In 1982, Parliament changed the constitution to make Kenya a one-party state. The country remained as such until 1991 when pressure, through people's struggles for democratic change, compelled the government to repeal this constitutional provision and provide for a return of multi-party democracy.

Despite these political setbacks during the 1960s and 1970s, international commentators on Kenya cited the country as a successful development model of growth, with useful lessons for the rest of the developing world. With an average annual economic growth rate of more than 5% and relatively high per capita income compared to many developing countries, the West generally praised Kenya as 'one of the few economic and political ornaments to be held up, admired and analyzed to detect what might be transferable in its exceptional performance' (Gibbon, 2015). Explanations for the 'exceptional ornament' varied. Some argued that Kenya had followed a relatively free market economy compared to its neighbors. Others attributed this success to a generally stable political system. The 'Kenya debate' occasioned robust discussion on relations between development, indigenous capital, and state-society relations in developing countries.

The return of multi-party democracy in 1991 led to the expansion of space for the enjoyment of civil and political freedoms. It generally enhanced the space and allowed for the proliferation of political groups, including opposition political parties and human rights organizations. But these gains were not effectively consolidated. The state paralyzed the opposition political parties by preventing them from operating in certain areas. The government considered to be the strongholds of the ruling party. In other instances, the government would deny the opposition the licenses to hold political meetings. Thus, in spite of multi-party democracy, the ruling party (KANU) and its leader, President Daniel ArapMoi, continued to constrain the new space through repressive measures. The 1992 and 1997 elections, in particular, were marred by serious political violence at the hands of militia organized by the ruling party. Through legal and extra-legal means, the government weakened the opposition political parties and obstructed the making of a new constitution. This enabled Moi and KANU to win both the 1992 and the 1997 general elections (Leys, 2018).

In 2002, the opposition parties formed an alliance, the National Alliance Rainbow Coalition (NARC), to compete against KANU in the December 2002 elections. They were aware that in the absence of comprehensive constitutional reforms, the ruling party would have advantages over the opposition and thus retain power. The alliance campaigned on a platform of comprehensive reforms and a promise to deepen democracy and they won the December 2002 general election.

In line with the campaign promise to implement governance reforms, the new government enhanced the space for participatory and general enjoyment of rights. From the outset, the government undertook to protect and promote fundamental rights and freedoms, and thus established the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) for this purpose. The government introduced legislation to facilitate the fight against corruption and developed a sector-wide reform programme-the Governance, Justice, Law and Order Sector (GJLOS)-to guide governance and justice reforms. The government re-stated the constitution-making process, established institutions to address corruption, and purged the judiciary of judges accused of corruption.

The NARC government also implemented a series of policies that resulted in the recovery of the economy and somehow restored the confidence of the people in government and its institutions.

Kenya's economic growth had been below zero, but implementing the government's policy, the Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation (ERSWEC), increased growth to about 7.0% in 2007. Real per capital incomes increased by 3% and poverty declined from 56% in 2000 to 46% in 2007.

The fissure in the power structure undermined key reforms. In particular, factionalism spilled over to the constitution-making process. The president's factions preferred a presidential system of government with centralized powers while the opposing faction preferred a parliamentary system. Amidst these divisions, the government and the elites around the president finalized their own version of the constitution that was presented to the country at a referendum in November 2005. The draft did not pass muster with the voters and did not receive sufficient support. People voted along the same ethnic divisions that divided the coalition.

The draft got support from the president's Mt. Kenya region and a few other votes were brought in by promising future inclusion in government. Other regions of the country voted against the draft. This polarization and deep ethnic divide shaped the violence after the disputed December 2007 presidential election results. The division gave rise to two political parties, the ODM, which drew members from communities whose leaders were excluded from power; and the PNU, which was hurriedly formed to enable President Kibaki to run for a second term in office.

By this time, national officials of NARC had joined the ODM and refused to let the president use the party to run for the 2007 elections. The government failed to recognize that the politics of exclusion had sharpened ethnic divisions in the society. The APRM report of 2006 had identified the politics of exclusion and marginalization of ethnic groups are critical fault lines and advised the government to attend to these concerns before the 2007 general election (Republic of Kenya, 2009).

The report also warned that the absence of accountability and impunity in general had weakened the relations between the state and citizens. The APRM warned that these would lead to a crisis if not addressed. The divisions laid a firm foundation on which the post-2007 election crisis developed and spread. But the crisis had another important outcome. The violence brought to the fore the key weaknesses in Kenya's political system that required addressing to prevent a recurrence of violence. International mediation, under the auspices of the African Union's (AU) African Panel of Eminent African Personalities led by Kofi Annan, identified a lack of political inclusion, perceptions of marginalization and a culture of impunity as some of the factors that undermined democracy in Kenya and which required fundamental reforms (Republic of Kenya, 2009).

Kenya's transition is characterized by a lot of back-and-forth. Democratic gains are yet to be consolidated. Citizens' efforts to promote change are visible and well rooted in all spheres. Also, the political sphere is highly pluralized. There are many registered political parties and many people participated in periodic elections. There is a relatively free media and general respect for freedom of expression. In spite of this pluralized spaces, there is a weak culture of political accountability in that leaders rarely account for their actions.

The political system is one in which ethnicity commingles with the electoral system to form a strong obstacle to democratic transition. The new constitution seeks to address some of the challenges to development and democracy. The new constitution is comprised of provisions to address some of the long-standing issues. A devolved system of government, for instance, is expected to promote development in all regions. An equalization fund will provide resource to the marginalized areas so that they can catch up with other regions.

The constitution also emphasizes the establishment of a government that reflects the Kenya's diversity. All the same, there has been no coherent approach to addressing ethnic divisions. Formation and reformation of parties along ethno-regional lines remains a major challenge in this respect. The new constitution identifies democracy and people participation as essential to the national values and principles of governance on which the government is based. It also seeks to foster the accountability of leaders by privileging integrity and leadership as the key pillars of governance; it requires public officers to adhere to the principles of public service. It also seeks to punish self-service and to promote social justice; including making guilty parties take responsibility for past abuses most. Importantly also is that the new constitution promotes rights and freedoms in an unprecedented manner. The Bill of Rights is fundamental and radical in many ways; the state is required to promote rights and freedoms while the courts are required to interpret the new in a manner that seeks to promote these rights. Accountability to the people and participation of the people are key aspects of the framework of the new law (Anderson and Lochery, 2008).

5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
The study adopted elite theory in explaining the political transition and democratic consolidation in selected African countries. The elite theory as developed by vilfredo, pareto, Roberto Michels, Gaetano Mosca and Jose Ortega Gassat among others, hinges on the fact that every society is composed of two classes of people (Varma 1975). The two classes are made of minority group who rule and the majority being ruled. More specifically, Roberto Michel's "iron law of oligarchy" dwells on element of organization, which exists in every kind of human society that strives for the attainment of a definite end (Varma 1975). In fact, Michelsconcluded that as a movement or party grows in size, more and more functions are to be delegated to an inner circle of leaders (elites), and, in course of time, the members of the organization are rendered less competent to direct and control them (Varma1975).

The above postulations mirror vividly the state of African politics. Arguably, the African elites appeared to have succeeded in rendering the majority incapable of controlling them through the perfected process of managing electoral frauds and heinous manipulation of state institutions. Instead of opening up the democratic space genuinely for people's participation, they created the kind of politics in which power concentrate and revolve in the hands of the very few elites who ultimately control the political system, including the institutions; the political parties, electoral bodies, security agencies, and judicial organs, etc.

Political transitions in Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya up to date to some extent have exposed vitriolic tendencies to alarming dimensions which threaten the stability of African state. Since

their independence, one of the political problems faced by these countries has been the issue of succession from one democratically elected regime to another which were intermittently disrupted by some military and social forces. Several attempts at providing political transition and democratic consolidation were hampered by personality cult of the emerging political gladiators who exploited the instrument of state to promote their selfish agenda, by way of manipulating transition programmes and advanced political strategies to prolong their stay. This is coupled with some anti-democratic practices as executive recklessness, abuse of the rule of law, abuse of power by political actors, vote buying and selling, money politics, campaign of calumny, hate speech and lack of internal democracy within political parties among others.

6. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Political transition and democratic consolidation in Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya have faced with complex challenges due to long term military incursion into the Africanpolitics and bad governance even after the returned of democracy.Several attempts at providing political transition and democratic consolidation in most African Countries are hampered byWeak institutions like Judiciary, electoral body, media and civil society which pave ways to ethnic politics, corruption, absent of transparency and accountability.Personality cult of the emerging political gladiators who exploited the instrument of state to promote their selfish agenda, by way of manipulating transition programmes and advanced political strategies to prolong their stay also posed a great challenge toward consolidating African democracy.Democracy in Africa leave great deal to be desired that is why most African countries still struggling with some anti-democratic practices such as political thuggery, noncompliance to democratic tenets, executive recklessness, abuse of power and rule of law by political actors, which have posed a great challenges in consolidating African nascent democracy due to leadership question. Additionally, the politicization of ethnic identity and the repression of one group by another has proved to be a contentious issue, ethnic tensions in countries such as Nigeria and Ghana have led to violence and even civil war which political elites need to address.

Nevertheless, remarkable improvements have been made over the years to ensure smooth transition of power in most African countries. One may conclude that in Nigeria in 2015, President Goodluck Jonathan Ebere adds more ingredients to the beauty of Nigeria democracy by peaceful hand over power to opposition leader President MuhammaduBuhari, on the other hand, Ghana had experienced a period of political freedom over years now which make it an example of working democracy that is setting pace for other countries in Africa, Kenya is not left behind in its bid to fortify democratic rule, all these are laudable and deserves commendations.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the paper recommended the following:

i.   Those who took political power from either military or democratic elected government should adhere to democratic best practices by ensuring that power is relinquished as when due without the temptation of usingforce.

ii. The continued influence of money in election must be curtailed to safeguard the democratic process and insulate it from infiltration by those whose motives and sources of wealth are questionable.

iii. Media houses, civil societies, non-governmental organizations among others should be given a smooth playing ground rather than being intimidated by the political class, this will go a long way to enhancing freedom of information which is hallmark of democracy.

iv. African countries should develop party ideologies and educate party members to improve their level of awareness. This is to ensure that all policies and programmes are formulated in line with party ideology to engender party loyalty and stability at all levels of government.

v.   To ensure that democratic rule is consolidated robustly in Africa, politics should not be viewed as do or die affairs, rather those at the position of power should accept defeats and transit power peacefully to whoever win election.

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